

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF  
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

*Fourth Series*

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 83.

SATURDAY, JULY 29, 1865.

PRICE 1½d.

## OUR WIDOW.

I **HONESTLY** believe that there breathes no human creature in the enjoyment of a thousand a year and upwards with a greater sense of respectability than myself. I mention the income, because the richer one is the more temptation there seems to be in some cases to set respectability at defiance. It is understood to be a virtue of the middle rather than of the upper classes. The best Society, I am afraid, is a little inclined to pooh-pooh it; the Fitz-Joneses term it Conventionalism, and agree that it is very necessary to be attended to by the plain Joneses, but as for themselves, they can afford to 'do things.' And such 'things' as they do do! I more especially refer to the female Fitz-Joneses. Those picnic riding-parties to Richmond, for instance, where they don't meet their chaperons until *after* they get to the *Castle* or the *Star and Garter*. Such is my sense of propriety, that I really don't think I could have joined one of those expeditions even in my worst bachelor-days. The 'accidental' meetings in the Row, again, of the same persons, would have been to my mind simply shocking. If such were my feelings before my Julia became Mrs Starch Primmer, you may imagine that I *now* regard all these goings on with even severer reprobation. Julia herself protests that I am too severe, and sometimes twits me with it in her affectionate and charming way. At the Club, I know I am set down as a consummate hypocrite by Major Tattel and others of that wicked set; but to all their gibes I am accustomed to reply calmly: 'Jeer on, sons of Frivolity; I am content to be upon Virtue's side, even though I be there alone'—or words to that effect.

In a word, until April last, there was not a more well-conducted head of a family—a phrase I take from the Census-paper, for dearest Julia and myself have not been blessed with children—in all Belgravia than your humble servant, nor one that felt more confident of keeping his good name. In the month of March, however, arrived Our Widow from India. She had a double

claim upon the hospitality of the house of Starch Primmer; for she had been my wife's bosom-friend at school; and—and— Well, she might at one time have been Mrs Starch Primmer, but for circumstances over which I at least had no control. She had chosen to prefer Mulligar Tawney of the Burrampooter Irregular Cavalry, with his notoriety and swagger and debts, to my humble self. Heaven knows I did not blame her. I had my own opinion, however, of Mulligar Tawney, which was fully justified by what subsequently took place. His constitution, originally of iron, had shewn symptoms of giving way, before his return to India; when he got there, it broke down. High play in 'the Hills,' whither he went to 'set himself up,' as the wretch called it (he was full of slang), emptied his pocket, or rather hers, poor thing—for he never had a five-pound note of his own—and brandy pawnee finished the work which bitter beer had begun. When a man once stoops to folly of any sort—as I have more than once observed—there is no knowing where he will find himself eventually. I make it a rule always to speak with charity of the dead, but Tawney was a brute in spurs. I repeat, I do not blame Clementina—Tina I used to call her at one time, so that you may be sure, with my strict notions of propriety, that the affair had advanced some distance—but how she *could* have allied herself with that hairy ruffian will always be a marvel to me. It was wrong of her to confide to a mutual friend—who not only repeated it to myself, but to others—that I was a 'muff;' but I have forgiven her even that. And when she just now returned to her native land, I am sure there was no old friend more ready to welcome her—I don't say with open arms, because our positions precluded anything of that sort now, and the very metaphor would be reprehensible—more ready to welcome her to hearth and home than Augustus Starch Primmer.

Of course our previous mutual relation rendered her coming excessively embarrassing, not to *her* indeed, as it turned out, but to *me*; and I seriously consulted my wife upon the propriety of locating

Our Widow in the neighbouring hotel. But Julia said—I thought at the time a little testily, but the dear creature was suffering from brow-ague: 'My dear Augustus, fiddle-de-dee; you are as prudish as Miss Forté Somers. If I don't mind dear Clementina's coming, you certainly need have no objection. With this tie about me, I could not go out even so far as the *Grosvenor*. She must be our guest, of course, and I do hope you will make her visit as pleasant as you can; for unless I get better, I can take her nowhere.'

Take her, my dear! You surely would not have me escort Mrs Mulligar Tawney *alone* anywhere!'

'Well, that's as *she* likes, Augustus. If *she* doesn't mind, and I don't mind, *you* surely need have no objection. Indian life is so different; and Captain Tawney was so queer, by all accounts, that I dare say we shall find her less conventional.'

'My darling, I don't like that word,' interrupted I gravely.

'When I have the brow-ague, Mr Starch Primmer, I take the first word that comes.'

Perceiving that dearest Julia had understood my meaning, though without yielding to its force, I argued the matter no further, but braced myself up for the trying moment when Clementina and I were to meet for the first time after an interval during which our lines of life had so diverged. I stayed away from the City the whole day on which she was expected, for I was in that tremor that I felt unable to attend to business; and when I saw from the drawing-room window the three cabs arrive, the roofs whereof bore Clementina's wardrobe, and in one of which she was, I am sure if there had been a back-door to the house, I should have made my escape upon the instant. There was a roaring in my ears, such as takes place when one keeps one's head too long under water, and the next thing I heard distinctly was: 'Why, 'Gus, dear, don't you know me?'

And there was Clementina Mulligar Tawney with both her hands outstretched for mine, and looking as bewitching as ever. She was altered, of course, but by no means for the worse. Her delicate cheeks had taken a tinge of brown from the eastern sun, which did not misbecome them; her crisp brown hair was as luxuriant as ever, and her blue eyes as lustrous; she had but undergone a sort of fairy change, which had transformed her from a blonde to a brunette. But she was a girl no longer: her attitude and manner were those of one accustomed to be obeyed; her voice, although low and clear, was very incisive, and its ring gave me great satisfaction, for it convinced me that that man in the Burrampooters had not had it all his own way. I repeated a few formal phrases, which I had prepared for this dreaded interview, and then Clementina swept away to embrace her 'own sweet Julia,' who was upon the sofa in her boudoir sipping quinine. The rapidity of Our Widow's movements, considering her Indian experience, was bewildering; while her conversation reminded me of nothing so much as an

exhibition of fireworks. My ideas were dreadfully upset by the whole transaction, but that which was uppermost was, that she had called me 'Gus,' and would probably do it again. Why, even dearest Julia had never ventured short of Augustus. I hoped that this demonstrative female did not expect that I should return to 'Tina.'

As time went on, and my wife's 'tie' with it—as though it were the pendulum—Mrs Mulligar Tawney began, as I had apprehended, to find Buckram Terrace exceedingly slow. She was a widow, and rather a recent one, but as she told me herself, with an epigrammatic force which I am unable to convey, she had left the country of Suttée, and did not intend to sacrifice herself to her husband's memory. Dearest Mulligar having fallen a victim to the climate of that dreadful country, was a circumstance she could never forget, but it was flying in the face of Providence to refuse to take a little relaxation. The suggestion of a little stroll through the Museum of South Kensington (where one sees nobody but scientific people, who are rarely scandal-bearers) was received with a ringing laugh.

'Thank you very much, 'Gus; but I don't care for museums. You need not trouble yourself either to propose attending a May meeting in Exeter Hall, which I perceive you have in your mind [which was perfectly true]. What I want, as my own sweet Julia's kindness has already detected, is a little lark of some sort. She says you have plenty of money, and that I may do just what I like with you. No, look here, 'Gus: the weather is charming; you shall take me down to Richmond, and give me a treat at the *Star and Garter*. There!'

'No, *not* there,' returned I emphatically, while the perspiration came out upon my forehead in three distinct rows of beads. 'Mrs Mulligar'—

'Call me Clementina,' interrupted she with a bewitching smile, 'or else I shall positively think it wrong to call you 'Gus. The idea of there being anything wrong between dear old Starch Primmer and anybody! And then she laughed in a manner which I cannot but characterise as forward.

'As for my age, Clementina,' returned I gravely, 'I regret for many reasons that I am not able to arrest the progress of time'—

'There, now, I have vexed you,' cried Clementina with her blue eyes swimming in tears; 'you who are so good and kind. I won't ask to go anywhere, I'm sure. It's quite enough for a lone widow like me to be offered a hospitable roof, without having little treats at the *Stut-tut-tar* and *Gug-gug-garter*.'

'Dearest Tina,' cried I, shocked beyond expression (and even propriety) by this method of putting the matter, 'I assure you, if I was not so occupied every day in the City, nothing would give me'—

'Why not go then on a *Sus-sus-Sunday*?' sobbed the irrepressible widow. 'I am sure there is no harm in enjoying upon that day the trees, the green fields, and wh-wh-whitebait.'

'Pray, pray, don't cry, Mrs—Clementina, I mean: you shall go wherever you like,' exclaimed I despairingly; for if she had gone on like that another minute, I believe I should have cried too.

'Next Sunday, then,' rejoined the widow from behind her pocket-handkerchief: 'is that a promise, 'Gus?'

'Yes,' groaned I; 'that is, if it's fine,' for I knew the barometer was falling.

'Then I've won six pair of gloves,' cried Clementina, clapping her hands, 'for Julia bet me half-a-dozen to one that I should never get you to do it.' And with that, her red petticoat flashed up stairs, and immediately afterwards peals of laughter from the two conspirators rang out from the boudoir.

The remainder of the week, my mind was occupied with meteorology, and aspirations for the fine weather to break up. But on Saturday, the gentleman in charge of that department in my newspaper foretold immediate tempests, and I felt that my doom was sealed. I knew that the next morning would shew an unclouded sky. It would be painful to me to describe in detail my endeavours to mitigate the force of public opinion before I started with Our Widow upon that unparalleled expedition. How I remarked unceasingly before the Butler that I had known Clementina ever since she was so high, and considered myself to be her second father; for I felt that an explanation, if not an apology, was due to so respectable a household as our own. By ordering the brougham at ten o'clock, I had been in hopes that the more charitable of my neighbours would imagine that Our Widow and myself were going to some place of worship at a great distance, such as St Paul's; but that was a plan she would not hear of.

'I go in a Hansom, my dear Gus, or I don't go at all,' observed she with decision. 'The idea of being "stived up" in a close carriage on such a lovely day as this! In a Hansom, and through Richmond Park'—

'Julia!' interrupted I, in an agony, appealing to my wife, still martyred by her Tic, for rescue, 'do speak to her, instead of laughing in that foolish way, which is certain to make your head worse. Do tell her how contrary to propriety it is—how quite out of the question!'

'My dear Augustus,' responded Julia, with all the gravity she could muster, but not without a malicious twinkle in her eyes, 'I think it will do you both all the good in the world. After being moped so long in a sick house, a little expedition of pleasure is just what you want; and as for dear Clementina, she has set her heart upon the Hansom, I know.'

Deserted by my natural protectress, there was nothing for it but to submit to the relentless widow: and five minutes afterwards we were being whirled down Buckram Terrace in the wished-for vehicle, yet not so rapidly as to escape the censorious comments of the inhabitants.

Where could Mr Starch Primmer be going to at such a pace with that young woman, just when everybody else was going to church?

'I protest I have not felt so jolly,' exclaimed Clementina with enthusiasm, 'since poor dear Mulligar fell a victim to that dreadful climate.'

It was not till we got to Hammersmith Bridge that I began to recover myself, or was able to make any effort to be agreeable to my fair companion. 'Here,' said I, 'is where the university boat-race took place last month.'

'What! and you never brought me to see it,' cried Our Widow with mock-indignation. 'O you wicked, wicked man!' and she tapped my arm with her parasol, in a manner that expressed she had forgiven me nevertheless.

'Sorry to interrupt,' exclaimed a dreadful voice immediately over our heads, 'but which gate of the Park are you agoin' in at?'

I could not have replied, even if I had known what to say, which I did not. A half-formed resolution of throwing this eavesdropper into the river, flashed across my brain, but I could decide upon nothing. I had only one determination, and that was of blood to the head.

'The Robbin 'Ood gate is as good as any,' continued the driver; 'only they don't let 'Ansoms in at no gates, only private carriages.'

'There,' cried I, 'Clementina; you see what comes of taking this sort of vehicle. 'Pon my word, I think we had better go back again.'

'Not a bit on it, sir; you need not disappoint the young lady,' resumed this wretch confidentially. 'I can manage it, bless you, if you'll only leave it to me.'

And with that, he shut down the trap, and I could hear him chuckling to himself outside in a way which, to say the least of it, was anything but respectful.

Clementina was in such convulsions of laughter that I could get her to listen to nothing serious, so we drove on in silence over Barnes Common, and by a number of respectable houses, the occupants of which, issuing forth to church in family procession, regarded us with a sort of malevolent pity. Presently the driver pulled up in front of a roadside inn—not an ivy-covered hostelry such as we associate with early hours and pastoral habits, but a regular public-house, such as might have come out into the country for the day from Whitechapel—and demanded a glass of beer and a hammer.

'How dare you stop at this dreadful place?' cried I, dashing at the trap-door with my umbrella; but the ferrule went into space, for the man had already descended, and thereby escaped impalement. Then there was a terrible knocking at the back of the cab, and presently a shout of triumph. 'There, I've been and took the number off, and now we're a private vehicle,' explained the driver coming round to the front and exhibiting the tin badge by way of trophy; 'and if the old woman don't let us through, why, then, I'll drive over her.'

And we very nearly did drive over her. She made an ineffectual attempt to shut the gate in our faces, and although our Jehu shouted out: 'It's the gentleman's own carriage; don't you see it ain't got a number on?' it is my belief she would have done it, but that he got our horse's head in, and the wheels followed perforce. If the ranger ever gives pensions to those park-servants who almost perish in the performance of their duties, I am sure he owes one to that heroic female. I never felt so hot, or so altogether ashamed of myself, as during that frightful altercation, during which I remained quite passive; but a mile and a half of the fresh air of the forest revived me mightily, and when Clementina suggested a little walking, I assented with cheerfulness. We sent the Hansom on to the inn, with instructions to call for us after our early dinner; and having thus severed our connection with that disreputable vehicle, I felt that I could almost enjoy myself. How exquisite was the woodland scene; how musical the voices of the birds, and how altogether enjoyable the leafy sol—, no, not solitude. The idea of Richmond Park being a pleasant lounge in that sort of weather, had apparently struck other Londoners beside ourselves. I say Londoners, because Pall Mall was written very legibly upon most of them, and especially on a couple of old fogies sauntering up directly towards us, and poisoning the balmy air



with the smoke of their cigars. The next instant, I would have taken my own risk in an earthquake if it had only swallowed up for certain one of those two men. I shut my eyes so tight that I saw sparks, but not before I had seen Tattel of the *Megatherium*, and felt sure that the recognition had been mutual.

'Did you know that old gentleman?' asked Clementina carelessly, when they had passed by.

'Yes,' said I with assumed calmness; 'but I don't like him. I had no intention of speaking to him.'

'He seemed rather to avoid us,' remarked the widow.

'Yes,' returned I; 'the dislike is mutual.' But well I knew that, though the major was too discreet to speak to me just then, I should hear enough of that meeting of ours when I next went to the Club.

The wretch kept dogging us for two hours, and engaged a table in our immediate vicinity in the saloon at the *Star and Garter*, for it may easily be imagined that I was not going, under the circumstances, to take a private sitting-room. I could hear him laughing in his horrid cynical manner, and repeating to his friend my phrase about 'preferring to be on Virtue's side, and alone;' and I never enjoyed a good dinner so little in all my life.

While Our Widow was putting on her cloak, I went up and shook hands with him.

'That's a friend of my wife,' said I carelessly—'a charming person.'

'She looks that,' observed the major significantly. 'Mrs Starch Primmer is not with you, I presume.'

'No,' said I quietly. 'The fact is, we have got separated from our party.'

I am not sure that this observation—though I made it with the best intentions—was consonant with my general devotion to truth. But what was I to say to a man like Tattel, and at so short a notice? It would have taken an hour and a half to have satisfactorily explained Our Widow.

'Ah, indeed,' responded he coolly; 'how unfortunate! But it often happens in this crowded hotel.'

It was early, and there was not a soul in that enormous coffee-room beside ourselves.

Almost immediately after Clementina's return, the waiter, who had had his orders, came to inform us that our carriage was at the door. As we left the room, I saw Tattel rush to a window which looked out into the road. I afterwards heard his voice remarking above our heads: 'So, you see, the whole party must have come in a Hansom.'

Plunged in melancholy, I sat silent in that horrid vehicle. The unsuspecting Clementina, on the contrary, was in the highest spirits.

'How dearest Mulligar, if that dreadful climate had but spared him, would have enjoyed a day like this! Now, be sure, 'Gus, we walk through Kew Gardens; Julia arranged the whole plan for me before we started. The Hansom drops us at this end of them, and meets us afterwards at the grand entrance. How thirsty that sauce à la Tartare has made me. I should so like an orange.'

As we walked through those splendid grounds, thronged with ten thousand holiday-makers, she demanded this vulgar fruit with such pertinacity, that I was tempted to break into the orangery, and pluck her one off the tree. At the Kew entrance, there were five hundred vehicles of all descriptions;

but our peculiar Hansom—red with yellow wheels—was apparent at the first glance.

'Home,' cried I—'home!' in a voice of pathetic earnestness.

'But stop at the first place you come to where there are oranges,' added Clementina.

Before the yellow wheels had made half-a-dozen revolutions, they were arrested in front of the stall of an itinerant trader. Upon two planks over an empty barrel were displayed, in luscious profusion, ginger-beer, slices of cocoa-nut, penny whistles, toffy, wooden dolls, and ORANGES. The enormous carriage traffic had to be delayed in that crowded place, while I leaped down amid jeers, and seized upon half-a-dozen of the wished-for delicacies. In my hurry and confusion, I forgot to pay for them, and was pursued by the proprietress of the establishment with shocking outcries. In my alarm and shame, I threw her half-a-sovereign instead of sixpence, and then sunk back in a sort of stupor.

Before I recovered myself, Clementina had got through all the oranges, and pronounced herself refreshed.

We were already in the neighbourhood of Belgravia, and it was some comfort to think that nobody we now met need have a suspicion that we had come from such a place as Kew Gardens; and yet such is the power of conscience—in the virtuous—that I fancied the better class of passengers seemed to turn round and regard us with reproving looks. In Buckram Terrace, this was even more the case than elsewhere, and when the butler opened the door to us, I distinctly heard him murmur: 'Gracious Evans!'

As I rose to leave the hated vehicle, these circumstances were fully explained. Clementina had quietly dropped her orange-peel over the little door, and upon the gangway of the Hansom there lay what looked like the *débris* of sixty oranges instead of six.

Words are wanting to describe the nature of my reflections—and of those of other people's—upon the events of that day with Our Widow; but I may observe that next morning there was a visible increase in the number of gray hairs in my whiskers; another such experience would make me an old man.

Since the above catastrophe, I have been placed in several false positions with respect to Mrs Mulligar Tawney, nor do I know how to estimate the loss that my character, through her exceeding naturalness, has sustained. Dearest Julia protests that her simplicity is charming, but for my part I should prefer her artificial. Compelled to take her out in the inevitable Hansom, to see the illuminations upon the night of the Queen's birthday, we got 'blocked' in Saville Row opposite Poole's crystal pillars. 'Separated from their party again, by Jove, Tattel,' observed a voice I knew.

'And fortunately with the same fair companion,' returned the military cynic.

'Well, it's a comfort to think it's the same,' rejoined the first voice. And then there was a malicious titter.

'Drive on,' cried I, in terrible tones, through the trap-door; 'I will pay for all you may run over.'

I had somehow not thought it worth while to go down to the Club since that day at Richmond; and I have now sent in my resignation as a member of the *Megatherium*. To get rid of Our Widow, thus encouraged by dearest Julia, is out of the question. I have therefore made up my mind

to enter parliament, for the purpose of introducing into this country the system of Sutte (opposed by Clementina for such obvious reasons), with a particular proviso that the act shall be retrospective.

### ELLSWORTH'S PET LAMBS.

WHEN the Prince of Wales travelled through the United States, he was fêted everywhere, and treated to all sorts of exhibitions, but it is said that the spectacle which pleased him best was the torch-light procession of the New York City Fire Department, seven thousand strong. It was certainly a sight which no other city in the world could shew. The Fire Department of New York is a volunteer association electing its own officers, and composed of all classes and grades of society; and the only remuneration of its members consists in an exemption from jury duty, obtained by a steady service of six years. The present mayor of New York was an active fireman at the time of his election; and the Fire Department Fund, for the relief of disabled firemen, has a credit balance of about £20,000. Every winter, the grand ball for the benefit of this fund is one of the sensations of sensation-loving New York.

The members of this Department are bound to leave their business and families at the sound of the fire-alarm, and are sometimes on duty for days together, on a service of enough danger and exposure to satisfy the strongest desire for excitement. Very often, firemen are killed—by the half-dozen at a time occasionally—and are buried with much pomp and ceremony, in a sort of semi-military funeral.

The statistics of the Fire Department, gathered from the last Report of the chief-engineer, report 14 engineers, 2194 members of engine-companies, 1184 members of hose-companies, 568 members of hook-and-ladder companies—total, 3960 members. The apparatus consists of 52 engines, 55 hose-carriages, 18 hook-and-ladder trucks, 27 steam-engines.\*

The firemen of the neighbouring cities united with the New Yorkers in their parade before the Prince, so that the light of nearly 7000 torches falling upon 7000 shirts as red as the British uniform-coat, rendered midnight as bright as midday; and presented a spectacle the like of which could be seen nowhere else on the habitable globe.

When two rival companies are put next to each other in a line of engines, great strife occurs. The engine which gives the other water, endeavours to overflow or 'wash' it, while the other endeavours to 'suck' dry its opponent. The friends of each company gather to its support, and sometimes broken heads are the sequel. As the firemen very often go directly from their places of business to the fire, they then of course wear their ordinary citizen's dress; and we have seen a foreman (or captain) of an engine bind up a leak in its suction-pipe by fastening a new broadcloth coat around it with the aid of a silk neck-tie.

Many engines and engine-houses are very elegant affairs. All the metal portion of the engine is often silver-plated, and the house contains a fine parlour, carpeted and furnished handsomely, with a piano

therein, and with solid rosewood doors and silver hinges. Quite frequently, 'hops' or dancing-parties take place at the engine-house during the winter. Amity Hose Company, No. 38, own three hose-carriages, one of which cost 8000 dollars. The business of the members, and their social standing, may be judged from this statement: fourteen of them are clerks, eight of them merchants, and two are bankers.

One of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the New York Fire Department, is the formation of the Fire Zouaves, at the beginning of the late civil war. A year or two before the war, Elmer Ellsworth of Chicago, Illinois, a young lawyer with no practice, organised a company of Zouaves, the members of which, lawyers, merchants, clerks, &c., agreed to abstain from all sort of immorality, including therein the wine-cup, and, we believe, tobacco. These young fellows Ellsworth drilled until they resembled a machine rather than a body of men, so simultaneous were all their movements. With his Zouaves, he travelled through the principal cities of the United States, sleeping on gymnasium floors, and giving public exhibition drills.

The fame of the Chicago Zouaves spread through the length and the breadth of the land, and Ellsworth became at once a well-known character. He came to Washington in President Lincoln's suite, when that gentleman journeyed to the national capital in February 1861. When the war broke out, and the unprepared North was crippled for want of troops to protect Washington, Ellsworth at once saw a source from whence troops could be created with almost magical celerity. He arrived in New York with a commission to recruit a regiment. He appealed to the Fire Department to form a Fire Zouave regiment. The roll, like a fiery cross, went from engine-house to engine-house, and in three days a regiment of twelve hundred able-bodied men, used to hardship and exposure, was formed. In three days more, they were uniformed and on their way to glory or the grave.

The formation of this regiment partook of the patriarchal. The foreman of a fire company was the captain of a regimental company; his first and second assistants were his lieutenants; and the field-officers were chosen from among the assistant chief-engineers. In one case, every single member of a company volunteered for two years of the war. The raw material of the first Fire Zouaves was excellent, but it needed a judge of human nature to work it up into something useful. Unfortunately, Colonel Ellsworth, who understood thoroughly how to manage it, was killed, the first victim of the sanguinary struggle, and the lieutenant-colonel, 'Pony' Farnham, an ex-assistant chief-engineer, who was appointed to succeed him, suffered the same fate. Owing to these untoward circumstances, the Fire Zouaves failed to do the noteworthy things expected of them during their two years of service. Many funny stories, however, are told of the Pet Lambs, as they were nicknamed. One, both good and true, is this: On their first arrival at Washington, the Lambs, of course, immediately inspected the fire-quenching apparatus of the city. It was so inferior to their own superb facilities for combating the destructive element, that it excited their derision, while the management of the first fire which they witnessed brought forth contemptuous groans. Shortly afterwards, a conflagration broke out which threatened

\* In spite of all this, the loss by fire in New York last year was 2,935,054 dollars.

Willard's, the great hotel of Washington. Despairing of conquering it, the city authorities sent for assistance to the Fire Zouaves, then quartered in the old Capitol. Ellsworth detailed twenty men from each company, put himself at their head, and went at 'the double' down Pennsylvania Avenue. Arriving at the fire, they took away from the local firemen their apparatus, and proceeded in their own way to 'fight fire.'

Never was there a fire kindled since the world began at which so much personal daring or rather recklessness was shewn. There were among the detailed men members of companies which had been rivals in New York for years. To outdo each other was their desire and attempt, working at the same time intelligently, and with an eye to the speedy putting down of the conflagration. One man was actually held head-downwards by his comrades while he directed a stream of water through a small window just under the roof of a tall building. Of course, Willard's was saved; the proprietor feasted the Lambs; and the Washington aldermen thanked them by resolution. They were lions for some time, became then lost to public notice, and were quietly mustered out when their term of service expired. Like March, they came in like a lion and went out like a lamb.

Just after the Fire Zouaves' formation, Billy Wilson, an ex-prize-fighter in New York, organised another curious military body—a company composed entirely of thieves, burglars, and pick-pockets. He was said to observe, as he left New York with his command, that the police force might be disbanded, as he did not leave a black-guard behind him. It was currently reported that a chaplain addressed this regiment very earnestly once, telling them that if they did not have a care, they would all go to Tophet; whereupon a soldier sang out: 'Three cheers for Tophet!' which were given with a will, Tophet being supposed to be some place in Dixie. It was also said that on parade every officer was careful to keep at least an arm's-length in front of his company, for fear of having his pocket picked.

The 'Billy Wilson Zouaves,' however, kept under strict discipline by their commander, served their enlistment-term out very creditably.

#### JOHN CLARE

No man, we hold, has any right to tell us a sad story—a fiction, the perusal of which shall leave upon our minds an unpleasant impression, or which, as the phrase goes, does not 'end well'; but, on the other hand, when the tale is a true one, we are wrong to stop our ears, and refuse to listen upon the ground that we have sufficient sorrows of our own. The true history of the life of any man is always instructive to his fellows, even though it were that of a Northamptonshire peasant; but when that peasant happens also to be a genuine poet, singing truthfully of Nature, better than Bloomfield, if not so well as Burns, and making his voice heard through the length and breadth of the land, it is well that we should learn something about him, though he lived a life of abject toil, and ended his days in a pauper lunatic asylum.

Mr Frederick Martin has presented to us the biography of such a man in his *Life of John Clare*;\* and a most interesting though painful book it is. Not

only does the central figure in this life-picture—the poet himself—now without bread and cheese, and far less meat, and standing on the threshold of the workhouse, and now again the honoured guest of London society, with Rossini setting his verses to music, and Vestris reciting them in the national theatre, fascinate us with his joys and woes, but the accessories and incidental occurrences are of themselves noteworthy; nor do we remember ever having read a biography more typical of a class which comprehends many millions of our fellow-countrymen—namely, the Field Labourer.

On the 13th of July 1793, John Clare was born, at a village called Helpston, half-way between Stamford and Peterborough, on the borders of the Lincolnshire Fens. All the country round is in the hands of half-a-dozen noble families, while the bulk of the people live little better than when the Romans built their *Durobrivæ* in those parts—crowded together in mean hovels of mud. In the fourth part of such a hovel lived the father and mother of John, old Parker Clare and his wife. The origin of this family was shameful as well as mean, for this Parker was the illegitimate son of a vagabond Irishman, who, some thirty years before, had taken the post of parish schoolmaster for a little time, and then tramped away nobody knew whither. The forsaken mother soon went to the workhouse. The son grew up wretchedly poor and weakly, and at eighteen married one Anne Stimson, living in a neighbour-village. Seven months after, his wife was prematurely delivered of twins, a girl and a boy. Twins! where there was not food even for the parents! But the girl died in early infancy; the boy survived to be John Clare the Poet.

What a spot had this singer for his birthplace! A low dark hut, shared by strangers, and set in a gloomy plain, covered with stagnant pools, and overhung by mists. Yet out of these elements the boy soon learned to extract something beautiful. 'Though but in poor health, the parents were never able to keep little John at home. He trotted the live-long day among the meadows and fields, watching the growth of herbs and flowers, the chirping of insects, the singing of birds, and the rustling of leaves in the air. One day, when still very young, the sight of the distant horizon, more than usually defined in sharp outline, brought on a train of contemplation. A wild yearning to see what was to be seen yonder, where the sky was touching the earth, took hold of him, and he resolved to explore the distant, unknown region. He could not sleep a wink all night for eager expectation, and, at the dawn of the day the next morning, started on his journey without saying a word to either father or mother. It was a hot day in June, the air close and sultry, with gossamer mists hanging thick over the stagnant pools and lakes. The little fellow set out without food on his long trip, fearful of being retained by his watchful parents. Onward he trotted, mile after mile, towards where the horizon seemed nearest; and it was a long while before he found that the sky receded the further he went. At last he sank down from sheer exhaustion, hungry and thirsty, and utterly perplexed as to where he should go. Some labourers in the fields, commiserating the forlorn little wanderer, gave him a crust of bread, and started him on his home-journey. It was late at night when he returned to Helpston, where he found his parents in the greatest anxiety, and had to endure a severe punishment for his romantic excursion. Little John

\* Macmillan. London and Cambridge.



Clare did not mind the beating; but a long while after felt sad and sore at heart to have been unable to find the hoped-for country where heaven met earth?

Prudent bachelors of the upper classes profess to wonder why poor folks are so improvident as to marry; they do not consider that these unfortunates, who lay no claim to being philosophers, have no other pleasure but love. Potatoes and water-porridge, which constituted the ordinary fare of the persons in the Clares' rank of life, could scarcely afford much gratification of the palate; and though wheaten bread and pork were sometimes indulged in on a Sunday, it did not happen every week. Of books, they had none; but very much to the father's credit, he managed, by the greatest privations on his own part, to send his little son to an infant school. His extreme poverty becoming, however, more and more abject, he was compelled to put John to hard work at an earlier age even than usual in country places. He was sent out to thrash before twelve years old, with a small flail that had been made on purpose to suit his feeble arms; and though totally unfitted for such employment, or for the plough, in following which along the ill-drained fields he caught tertiary ague, yet he was able to perform his task, and even do a little extra work whereby he earned a few pence for educational purposes. For above all things, little John would be a scholar. He put himself to school for five evenings in the week at Glington, and learned to read, although certainly not to spell.

About this time Clare was very nearly becoming a lawyer's clerk. A paternal uncle of his was footman to a lawyer at Wisbeach, and had persuaded his master to make trial of his nephew in the office; but when little John made his appearance in that civilised city in a pair of breeches made out of a dress of his mother's, and a waistcoat from her shawl, the whole surmounted with an old white tie, and finished at the extremities with black woollen gloves, the great man revoked his promise, and declined to receive such a portent in any capacity whatever. A great writer has informed us that the worst thing which Poverty can do to us is to make us ridiculous, and certainly among its other ill turns, it worked that evil with John Clare again and again.

After a short time at carting manure, John hired himself as potboy and hostler to Mr Francis Gregory of the *Blue Bell*, who seems to have been the very flower of beer-house keepers. He treated the pale little boy more like a son than a servant, and gave him light work and plenty of leisure. And now the characteristic part of Clare's nature began to develop itself. As soon as he found himself to some extent his own master, he began to lead a sort of hermit's life. 'He took long strolls into the woods, along the meres, and to other lonely places, and got into the habit of remaining whole hours at some favourite spot, lying flat on the ground with his face toward the sky. The flickering shadows of the sun; the rustling of the leaves on the trees; the sailing of the fitful clouds over the horizon, and the golden blaze of the sky at morn and eventide, were to him spectacles of which his eye never tired, with which his heart never got satiated.' At this period, too, being of the ripe age of fifteen years, he fell in love. The lady of his affections was the child of one Joyce, a well-to-do farmer of the neighbourhood,

who was naturally displeased at his daughter's having any communication with a 'beggar boy,' and put a stop to it after about six months. But it was altogether innocent and childlike. Mute to all others, the young poet told her 'how he loved the trees and flowers, and the singing nightingales, and the lark rising into the skies, and the humming insects, and the sailing clouds, and all the grand and beautiful works of Nature; but he never told her that he thought her more beautiful than aught else in God's great world.' And yet, with the exception of a few verses addressed to Patty, his future wife, the whole of Clare's love-poetry came to be a worship of Mary Joyce; and though he wrote no verses as yet, he cut her name on stones, and trees, and walls, and it was carved so deep in his own heart that nothing but Death erased it. Moreover, though many wooed her, Mary herself—it may be for the sake of her boy-lover—died unmarried.

But at this time took place a more important event to the World than John Clare's falling in love—namely, his falling in with Thomson's *Seasons*. One morning, while tending his master's cattle, a farmer's son shewed him a copy of it, whereat he got excited above measure. The brutish possessor refused to lend him it: it was a trumpery book, he said, and could be bought for eighteenpence, and he did not see why people who wanted it should not buy it. Eighteenpence was not a large sum to him, as it was to little John. John had only sixpence, nor had his father the required shilling to advance him; but his good mother managed to scrape together sevenpence, and the other five pennies were procured on loan from divers visitants at the *Blue Bell*; and John waited with eagerness for the next Sunday, that he might have a day's leisure to run over to Stamford and procure the precious volume. It is right that the well-to-do should hear occasionally how dear and difficult of acquisition by the very poor are the leisure which they hold so lightly, and the money which they spend so freely; how ignorant, too, of the commonest things such folks may be. Clare actually did not know that this book was not procurable at Stamford, nor anywhere else, upon a Sunday. He started before dawn, and remained three hours opposite the bookseller's shop, expecting it to open, which, of course, it did not do. How, then, was he to get the book, since all week-days were work-days? He had to negotiate another loan of twopence, and out of that to pay another boy one penny for doing his work—which was that of 'minding' the horses while at pasture—and one penny for 'keeping his secret.' Again he sat before the closed shutters of the bookseller's shop, being about an hour and a half too early. 'At last, there was a noise inside the house, a rattling of keys and drawing of bolts. The bookseller slowly opened his door, and was immensely astonished to see a little country lad, thin and haggard, with wild gleaming eyes, rush at him with a demand for Thomson's *Seasons*. Was there ever such a customer seen at Stamford? The good bookseller was not accustomed to excitement, for the old ladies who dealt at his shop bought their hymn-books and manuals of devotion without any manifestations of impatience; and even the young ones, though they asked for Aphra Behn's novels in a whisper, came in very quietly and demurely. Who, then, was this queer, haggard-looking country boy, who could not wait for Thomson's *Seasons* till after breakfast, but was hovering

about the shop like a thief! The good bookseller questioned him a little, but did not gain much satisfactory information. That his little customer was servant at the *Blue Bell*; had hired himself to Master Gregory for a year; had a father and mother maintained by the parish; and had seen Thomson's *Seasons* in the hands of a farmer's boy—that was all the inquisitive bookseller could get at; and, indeed, there was nothing more to tell. However, the Stamford shopkeeper was a man of compassion, and seeing the wan little figure before him, resolved upon a tremendous sacrifice. So he told Clare that he would let him have Thomson's *Seasons* for one shilling: "You may keep the sixpence, my boy," he exclaimed, with a lofty wave of the hand. John Clare heard nothing, saw nothing; he snatched up his book, and ran away eastward as fast as his legs would carry him. "A queer customer," said the shopkeeper, finishing to take down his shutters.

The sun had risen in all his glory when John Clare was trotting back from Stamford to Helpston. Every now and then he paused to have a peep in his book. This went on for a mile or two, after which he could contain himself no longer. He was just passing along the wall of the splendid park surrounding Burleigh Hall, the trees of which, filled with melodious singers, overhung the road. The village of Barnack in front looked dull and dreary; but the park at the side was sweet and inviting. With one jump, John was over the wall, nestling, like a bird, among some thick shrubs in the hedge; and then and there he read through Thomson's *Seasons*—read the book through twice over, from beginning to end. And the larks and linnets kept singing more and more beautifully; and the golden sun rose higher and higher on the horizon, illuminating the landscape with a flood of light, a thousandfold reflected in the green trees and the blue waters of the lake. John Clare thought he had never before seen the world so exquisitely beautiful; he thought he had never before felt so thoroughly happy in all his life. He did not know how to give vent to his happiness; singing would not do it, nor even crying. But he had a pencil in his pocket and a bit of crumpled paper, and unconscious almost of what he was doing, with a sort of instinctive movement, he began to write—began to write poetry. The verses thus composed were subsequently printed, under the title *The Morning Walk*, though what Clare actually wrote on his crumpled bit of paper was probably very imperfect in form, and not fit to be seen till thrice distilled in the crucible of his future "able editor."

Clare's engagement at the *Blue Bell* having come to an end, various professions, such as stone-cutter and cobbler, suggested themselves; but the one which took John's fancy most was that of an under-gardener at Burleigh Park, the seat of the Marquis of Exeter. It was not a good place as regarded pay, which was but 'eight shillings a week, and find himself,' and in every other light it was a bad place. The head-gardener, an habitual drunkard, used to lock his apprentices up all night, to prevent their stealing the fruit; but he gave them plenty of opportunities of frequenting the public-house, and of these they took advantage. It was at Burleigh that John Clare became for the first time dissipated. But dissipation was not very pleasing to him, for we find him running home before the first year of his apprenticeship was up, and at home he remained—a farm-labourer once

again. He now invariably spent his evenings in writing poetry, a great quantity of which, written upon scraps of whitey-brown paper, he soon accumulated at the bottom of an old cupboard in his bedroom. He was timid about confessing to this occupation, on account of the entire want of sympathy in his friends and relatives. 'It sometimes happened, on a Sunday, that he would take a walk through the fields, in company with his father and mother, or a neighbour; and seeing something particularly beautiful, an early rose, or a little insect, or the many-hued sky, John Clare would break forth into ecstasies, declaiming, in his own enthusiastic way, on what he deemed the marvellous things upon this marvellous earth. His voice rose; his eyes sparkled; his heart bounded within him in intense love and admiration of this grand, this incomprehensible, this ever-wonderful realm of the Creator which men call the world. But whenever his companions happened to listen to this involuntary outburst of enthusiasm, they broke out in mocking laughter. A rose was to them a rose, and nothing more; and an apple they only valued higher, as something eatable.' Parker Clare's whole notion of poetry was confined to the halfpenny ballads hawkers sell at fairs, and it struck him, not unnaturally, that the things being so cheap, it could not be a paying business. Actuated probably by a similar opinion, John's mother, having discovered her son's hoard of verses, put every one of them behind the fire. Upon this, John gave his parents to understand that he was not writing trash, but verses 'such as were to be found in books;' and to convince them of it, he read them a few verses which he had just composed. This plan not only signally failed, but they informed him that he had not nearly reached the standard of the halfpenny ballads. Rightly imagining that this preference was for the Print rather than for the ideas conveyed, the young poet committed his verses to memory, and pretended to read them out of one of the printed sheets. This time his audience was all applause. 'Ah, John, if thou couldst make such-like verses, that would do.' Mr and Mrs Parker Clare were indeed, without knowing it, wonderfully like the critics in the great world.

This praise, though obtained under false pretences, was very sweet to John, and, moreover, the nefarious practice was useful to him in another way. When his parents laughed at a sentence which he deemed pathetic, he set himself at once to correct it to a simpler style; when they asked him for the explanation of a sentence, he noted it down as obscure; and when an *encore* was demanded, the slip of song was marked as a success. These successful slips—with which all readers of poetry were soon to be made acquainted—he hid between his bed and the lath-and-plaster wall. The only approach to a literary adviser he could think of was one Thomas Porter, who lived in a lonely cottage about a mile from Helpston, and one day he mustered up courage to confide his scraps of paper—blue, red, white, and yellow, for they had served the purposes of the baker and the chandler, to begin with—to this rustic critic. Mr Porter kept them a week, and after much profitless scrutiny, returned them with these awful words: 'You don't know grammar, and before you know that, it is impossible that you should write poetry.' John, therefore, procured, at tremendous sacrifices, a certain pedantic volume



called *Lowe's Critical Spelling-book*, treating of oxytones and quartacutes, which plunged him into the deepest despondency. For a short time John even took to the militia, so desperate was his case, and for a still briefer period, to living with some gipsies in the neighbourhood; but presently he fell in love with a lass called Patty Turner (his future wife), and then his muse once more revisited him, as was but fitting. He bought, with six months' savings, a manuscript book to write out his best poems in, and contrived to persuade a bookseller at Market-Deeping to print three hundred prospectuses of a book to be called *Original Trifles*, by John Clare. If a hundred subscribers could be got for this unpromising work, he was assured that the verses would be published, and in the mean time, to the intense bliss of the author, a specimen poem—a *Sonnet to the Setting Sun*—was actually set up in type. As a considerable drawback to his joy, however, John Clare had at the same time to apply to the parish for relief, to save himself from sheer starvation.

At this time, when our poet's fortunes were at their lowest ebb, arrived one Mr Drury, bookseller, from Stamford. He had seen and liked the *Sonnet to the Setting Sun*, and he came over to the wretched cottage to see whether there were other poems like it by the same hand. Only seven subscribers out of the necessary hundred had as yet declared themselves, and it may be easily imagined how glad was Clare when this gentleman offered to publish a volume of poems at his own risk. Mr Drury was related to Mr John Taylor, head of the then eminent publishing house of Taylor and Hessey; and in the end, the London house brought the book out. Such obstacles had intervened in the meantime, however, and so dispirited by them had the poet shewn himself, and again so unduly elated by the least sign of their removal, that nothing was told him of how matters were proceeding; so that it almost took Clare's breath away when a good friend of his called Holland—a dissenting minister greatly interested in his affairs—entered his house one morning, and informed him that he was famous. All London was talking of him, he said (which was quite true with respect to his literary circles), and Mr Gifford had given him a most eulogistic article in the *Quarterly*; but as to this last news, Clare had never so much as heard that there was a review of that name.

In course of time the fame of the Northamptonshire Peasant, as he was described on the title-page of his book, penetrated even into the misty fens. One General Reynardson began the great patronising movement by asking the poet to his house, but gave him nothing except dinner with his footmen. The Right Honourable Charles William, Viscount Milton, who had in vain been before appealed to upon the poet's behalf, now saw his way to being the protector of humble genius, and also gave him a seat at his servants' table, as well as 'put his hand into his pocket, and threw a quantity of gold into Clare's lap;' while the Marquis of Exeter, not to be outdone by his Whig rivals, the Fitzwilliams, granted him an annuity of fifteen guineas for life. This last piece of true liberality enabled the poor poet to make Patty his wife.

So successful were the *Poems of Rural Life* in town, that John received an invitation to visit London, where he no longer dined with gentlemen's servants, but was treated like a man of genius. His

clothes, it is true, were not of a fashionable character, nor could the most delicate suggestions of Mr Taylor induce him to accept others, with the exception of a long great-coat, in which all-concealing garment he dined with many great people, and went to evening-parties of considerable fashion. In particular, Lord Radstock took a mighty fancy to him, and remained his friend for life; and also a Mrs Emmerson, a literary lady, of good fortune, whose house in Stratford Place was always open to him, and where he afterwards resided for some time. During a second visit to London, after the publication of his *Village Minstrel*, with a portrait of the author by Hilton, R.A., and a sketch of his cottage—much idealised—Clare was even still more fêted. He met Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Charles Lamb; he was intimate with Thomas Hood; he was flattered by lords and ladies, and even by the great Mr Murray of Albemarle Street; and he fared sumptuously every day. But consider what a change must his village hut, with its coarse fare, have been to him after all these things; how impossible it was to reconcile them with his real position as a day-labourer in the fields; how acutely he felt the loss of all society with which he could exchange an idea: how cruel, in short, it was to lift him up so high, and then to suffer him to sink so low again. He had fame enough, even in the country. Vulgar notoriety-hunters flocked to his poor cottage; blue-stockings, clergymen, schoolmasters, and even a whole boarding-school of young ladies; but they came with no other object than to stare. Some of these people treated him with liquor at the neighbouring public-house, but that was the extent of their benefits. He was dismally poor, and almost as crippled with the ague as his father and mother with the rheumatism; and those relatives relied as solely upon him for support as did his wife and family of six.

A subscription was got up for him by the strenuous efforts of some excellent men—especially one Dr Bell of Stamford,\* and kind-hearted Allan Cunningham—and reached the sum of four hundred and twenty pounds, the interest of which, added to the bounty of Lord Exeter, produced him forty-five pounds a year. This sum, which would have been wealth to Clare in his former position, would have been little enough under his present circumstances, even had he been able-bodied and good for work. In the summer of 1825, his embarrassments grew to a climax, though 'personally he lived like a beggar, eating little else than bread and potatoes, and drinking nothing but water.' The full extent of his wretchedness he concealed through pride. The reproaches which Mr Martin scatters with a liberal hand upon the county magnates were not deserved in all cases. Earl Fitzwilliam, for one, seems never to have understood how really indigent the poet was; for even when, at last, he caused a comfortable cottage to be built for him, he gave him nothing beyond the old allowance of fifteen pounds a year to keep himself therein. What poor Clare and his family wanted was not so much a roof as daily bread. All the efforts made to raise the sum of two hundred pounds to enable him to take a little farm—which would have been exactly the thing suited to him—failed. His rich and noble patrons could not muster so much money among them for such a purpose.

\* It is remarkable how, throughout this narrative, the profession of healing exhibits itself in the true good Samaritan fashion.

The Marquis of Northampton made, indeed, an appeal to his county on behalf of the Northamptonshire Peasant, but he did not back it with a shilling; he seemed to understand that such a philanthropic work was a very fit one to be undertaken, but his own donation was comprised in an offer to take ten copies of a certain impossible edition of Clare's complete works which he recommended should be published. But the fact was that Clare's books no longer sold. His last and best effort, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, fell almost still-born from the press, for the day of gold-leaved Annuals with steel engravings had set in, and there was no more demand for genuine poetry—songs of the fields and flowers with the dew upon them. We are not by any means inclined to take a sentimental view of social matters, but there is no doubt that the local aristocracy neglected, in Clare's case, one of their few opportunities of shewing their usefulness. He may not have been of sufficient mark—although we think he was—for the Country to have saved him by a pension, and perhaps the country, as represented by the Government, did not know of his needs. But Northamptonshire in the persons of its nobility and gentry—for the clergy did do something for him, and the doctors more—should not have let Clare starve: nay, worse, it suffered him through actual want to lose his wits.

This part of the poet's story is almost too sad to tell. 'Working fifteen and sixteen hours a day during harvest-time, and not unfrequently standing up to his knees in mud in the undrained fields, his health gave way before long, and then there was an end of all work. He was confined to his bed for longer than a month, and gaunt poverty now again made its appearance. There were ten persons to be clothed and fed, and no money incoming save the small quarterly stipend settled upon the poet. When Clare saw that his children were wanting bread, his heart trembled in agony of despair. He rushed forth once more to labour in the fields, but had to be carried home by his fellow-workmen; a mere look at his feverish ague-stricken frame being sufficient to shew them that he was utterly unfit to be out of doors. So he had to lay his head again on his couch, happily unconscious for a time of what was passing around him. There was deep sorrow and lamentation in the little hut of the poet.'

Little gleams of prosperity broke in upon him, but only to leave his atmosphere darker than ever. He began to see his Mary again, and to write sonnets to her—his Mary who had long been dead and buried, although his doctor knew it not, and therefore did not guess at first that the reason of his patient was tottering. But he himself well knew that he was going mad. He wrote one agonising appeal for help to his London publisher—by no means a bad man, be it remembered—and it received no answer: 'then a final, still more piercing cry for help. After that, all was quiet at the pretty cottage at Northborough. The last struggle was over.'

When Clare's madness became indisputable, one or two kind friends got him placed in a private lunatic asylum, in Epping Forest, where he was well treated. He wrote verses in this confinement as beautiful as any he had ever penned, and seemed happy enough but for his passionate desire to see his ideal Mary. With that object, he ran away from his place of durance in the fourth year, and

managed somehow, after unheard-of hardships, to reach home. He seems to have got wonderfully better there, and, according to his biographer, ought to have been suffered to remain, but his patrons ordained it otherwise. He was carried to the county Lunatic Asylum at Northampton, and Lord Fitzwilliam, who allowed eleven shillings a week for his maintenance, did not see why he should not be placed in the paupers' ward. The authorities at Northampton, however, greatly to their credit, placed him in the best ward among the private patients, and he was always treated with the greatest kindness and consideration. The poet was twenty-two years in this asylum, forgotten by the world. 'During the whole of this period, not one of all his former friends and admirers, not one of his great or little patrons, ever visited him. This he bore quietly, though he seemed to feel it with deep sorrow that even the members of his own family kept aloof from him. "Patty" never once shewed herself in the twenty-two years; nor any of her children, except the youngest son, who came to see his father once. The neglect thus shewn long preyed upon his mind, till it found vent at last in a sublime burst of poetry

I am! yet what I am who cares, or knows?

My friends forsake me like a memory lost.

I am the self-consumer of my woes,

They rise and vanish, an oblivious host,  
Shadows of life, whose very soul is lost.

And yet I am—I live—though I am tossed

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,

Into the living sea of waking dream,

Where there is neither sense of life, nor joys,

But the huge shipwreck of my own esteem

And all that's dear. Even those I loved the best  
Are strange—nay, they are stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod,

For scenes where woman never smiled or wept;

There to abide with my Creator, God,

And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept

Full of high thoughts, unborn. So let me lie,

The grass below; above, the vaulted sky.'

The last day he was taken out to enjoy the fresh air and the golden sunshine, was on Good Friday, 1864. On the 20th of May, last year, the poet closed his eyes for ever. 'I want to go home,' were his last words. He had always expressed a wish to sleep his death-sleep in the churchyard of his native village, and although his noble patron declined to furnish the modest sum necessary for the removal of his remains, a few friends to poetry raised the money among themselves, and buried him at his own place—Helpston. 'There now lies,' concludes his biographer, 'under the shade of a sycamore-tree, with nothing above but the green grass and the eternal vault of heaven, all that earth has to keep of John Clare, one of the sweetest singers of nature ever born within the fair realm of dear old England—of dear old England, so proud of its galaxy of noble poets, and so wasteful of their lives.'

## THE CLYFFARDS OF CLYFFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LOST SIR MANSINGBERD,' &c.

CHAPTER IX.—MR CLEMENT CARR HAS A BAD NIGHT.

It has been recorded by inconsiderate admirers of Admiral Lord Nelson, that he never knew what fear was; if so, he must be held to have been a very fortunate person, but by no means a courageous one; for true courage can no more exist

without sense of danger, than true charity without self-denial; otherwise, the boldest man in Christendom must have been the Hibernian wood-cutter who sat upon the top-branch of the elm-tree, while he himself was sawing it off; and the bravest corps that could be enrolled for any warlike purpose would be one selected from those who had made the most determined attempts at suicide, and who were rather in love with Death than in terror of him. Persons of this callous description might really be utilised to great advantage for assassinating tyrants, or firing powder-magazines from within; but though they might be called patriots, it is doubtful whether Posterity, who is the Law-lord that settles all claims to such titles, would term them Heroes. Now, any bravery which Mr Clement Carr might possess was of a sort that could not be questioned, when looked at from this point of view. He was by no means ignorant of the nature of fear, but, on the contrary, enjoyed a more delicate appreciation of it than falls to the lot of most men—and even women. He could bear to see a fellow-creature suffer any amount of pain, physical or mental, without losing his own presence of mind at all; his spirit was indomitable and unflinching in that respect to quite an extraordinary degree; but there his courage ceased. If the pain touched *himself*, his skin was sensitive; if danger threatened, something quailed within him, which he erroneously supposed to be his heart, and his knees had a knack of coming together, which they had certainly not acquired from any habit of devotion. As Mrs Clyffard had hinted, it had fallen to Clement's lot in life (and he had not repined at it) to shut up a good many persons in desolate rooms with double and even treble doors, designed to shut out sound: in cold and darkness, in hunger and nakedness, he had doomed many to pass just such a long autumn night as now lay before him; and yet, although he was full of wine and meat, and his apartment was light, and even brilliant, and a feather-bed huge enough to accommodate Mr Brigham Young and half-a-dozen of his consorts, was wooing him to slumber, yet he felt very far from comfortable.

The room was warm, but he shivered like any one of those poor wretches whom he had so often beaten, with the humane view (as he humorously told them) of promoting their circulation. He hated and despised them—all the more, perhaps, because from them he drew his means of livelihood—but now, in his splendid solitude, he would not have been sorry for even such company as theirs. Night—solitary Night—was always hateful to Clement; he sometimes dared to think that the terrors which he habitually suffered at that season, might be some set-off, in the awful Future, against what, by a stretch of severity, might possibly be considered his crimes. And yet he envied his brother Gideon—an indubitably wicked man, harsh and cruel, with nothing genial (such as the skilful imitation of animal noises) about him—who never, by night or day, felt one moment's remorse for the past, one touch of fear for the present. It was probable, indeed, that his death-bed would be a lesson. Clement, who was much the younger, rather looked forward to that, as the starting-place upon a better course of life for himself; he would be a richer man then, and could afford to be better; and, moreover, it would be time to begin to think about such matters—but in the meantime, what a blessed thing it seemed to be

brave like Gideon. Not to fear God—no, he didn't mean that; he really didn't—his cringing mind made base apology, ere the black thought had winged its way across it—but *Not* to fear man or devil! Surely such a bold heart as that must be a great possession. Mr Clement Carr could not conceal from himself (nor, indeed, from other people) that he *did* fear Man—and this very brother Gideon above all men; and if he did not do his very best to escape the clutches of the Foul Fiend, it was not because he did not fear *him*. He feared the Prince of the Powers of the Darkness very much, as likewise the Powers themselves—Ghosts, Spectres, Portents, Warnings, and as he called them, jestingly, and in the daytime, 'crawley-crawlies' of all kinds.

It was not the daytime now, nor was 11 p. m. an hour for jesting. At 11 o'clock a. m. he had replied, as we know, to Cator, speaking about the very apartment he was now occupying: 'Who kairsh for the ghost? I shall shleep in the besh room.' To what a different frame of mind had twelve hours brought him! Had he only a bottle of brandy, his former audacious sentiments might perhaps be induced to return. The servants had not yet retired for the night. Why should he not ring, and, upon pretence of sudden indisposition, demand that cordial? But had not his sister told him that there was no bell to ring except— His eyes wandered to the spot where, a few minutes ago, she had pointed out to him the massive rope of the alarm-bell hanging by the bedside. It was not a thing to escape even a very cursory glance, yet all his looking for it was vain; it was not there at all, and nothing remained to tell of it save the round dark hole in the ceiling, through which it must have been withdrawn, watching the pillow of Sir Thomas's death-bed like a baleful eye. Upon this depressing discovery, Mr Clement Carr's first impulse was to leave the apartment forthwith, and demand lodgment with Mr William Cator, though he should become a laughing-stock to that strong-minded individual to the end of his days; but the truth was, he dared not face the echoing passage, and the long gallery of frowning Clyffards, through which he must needs pass before he could come within call of any human being. His next idea was to render himself as safe as might be from the incursion of any ghostly enemy in his present quarters. To this end he made a thorough inspection of the whole apartment with a wax-candle in each hand, like the manager of a theatre shewing Majesty the way to its Box. Besides the triple door by which he had entered, there were two other doors, and when he opened these he exchanged one of the candles for a poker: the first led into an anteroom as large as any ordinary bedroom, but totally unfurnished, save for some things which looked uncommonly like coffin trestles, but which were doubtless the raw material of truckle-beds, to be used by the attendants of the great man who reposed in the Blue Chamber; other doors led from this room, he knew not whither, but he cut off all communication with it by lock and bolt. The second door opened upon a very small room, almost a recess, the purpose of which he could not guess; if it was for the accommodation of a page, it must have been a very duodecimo one that slept there. It would have served rather as a wardrobe for cloaks and hats, only there were no pegs; the shining floor was uncarpeted, and in the centre was a square, looking suspiciously like a trap-door.



Doubtless, the persons who had murdered Sir Thomas had come up that way, while his servants guarded the anteroom in vain. Again Mr Clement Carr plied lock and bolt; and having in the same manner made his triple door secure, felt even then no safer than Robinson Crusoe with his ladders drawn up, upon the day when he first saw the footprint in the sand.

How was it possible he should be comfortable with that round hole staring at him through the ceiling? Moreover, the fire was dying out, and there was no fresh fuel. Mr Clement looked at the four candles, wishing them four-and-twenty, and proceeded to put two of them out, for it was necessary to husband his resources, lest the night should be rendered still more hideous by darkness. First, however, at the imminent risk of reducing Clyffe Hall to ashes, Mr Carr pushed a lighted candle under the bed, and examined every article of furniture with the particularity of a broker; then having sounded the walls minutely, which fully maintained their reputation of being sixteen feet thick, he began to flatter himself that there was not much to be afraid of after all. For with respect to ghostly enemies, it is singular enough that we take precisely the same precautions against them as against material foes, such as burglars, and that even the most superstitious of us would prefer a lock upon his bedroom door to a horse-shoe, and the charms of a revolver to those of the most accredited exorcist. Mr Clement Carr pursued his nightly toilet with not a few uncomfortable lookings-back over his shoulder; and having wrapped his dressing-gown around him, took a chair by the enormous fireplace, and proceeded to warm his stockinged feet at the fast-waning embers, before he got into bed.

This is a position in which nobody has ever yet indulged without falling into what is called a 'brown study.' As the wood-fire glows and pales, as the sparks come forth and vanish, so the memories of the Past, now distinct, now dim, follow one another without our guidance, or schemes for the Future shape themselves as the clouds before the wind. There are none of us but have a history, more deeply interesting to ourselves than all the scrolls of Fame, and we love to linger over the pictures it presents, 'rolling the sweet morsel under the tongue'—even when we are well aware that it would have been better for us had some of them remained unpainted. It would have been well for Clement Carr had the long canvas of his past been white and recordless as the minds of those poor wretches whom it was his calling to tend, so ugly were the scenes displayed well-nigh from first to last as it unrolled, and yet it gave him pleasure to review them—although not all. He remembered with gloomy satisfaction the circumstances under which their first patient had been confided to their care, and how the hush-money got to be larger every year—only a little less than blood-money, and almost as ill-earned; and how, having thus discovered a short way to wealth, they had stuck to it, Gideon and he, though the road was dark and foul, and in places perilous; very dangerous, indeed, when Gilbert Lee, whose mad idea that he was sane had been so shared in by Mildred's mother, that she plotted his escape from the Dene, and afterwards married him. Perhaps, after all, that marriage saved the Carr system from unpleasant publicity;

but how he hated his dead sister, and her dead husband, and the living offspring of the two, who had treated him so superciliously that very evening! She should smart for that yet, if opportunity occurred, which it generally does, when we have our revenges to gratify. Then, on the other hand, what a match had Grace made! He loved her, it is true, no better than her elder sister, but he couldn't help being proud of her. How well contrived must have been all those pretended attentions to mad Cyril, directed in reality at Ralph himself, to have so bewitched the Clyffard, even at a spot so hateful to him by association as the Dene. How many ladies of high degree had striven for that prize, and failed. How many women in other days, as beautiful as she, and better born, had ruled at Clyffe by a far different title.

There was the 'fair lady,' for instance, for whose sake Bertram slew his brother. Cator had pointed out to him that day where oak had been laid on the great staircase to hide the blood-stained spot where Gervaise Clyffard fell; and yet, enchantress as she was, she had been the wife of neither. It was she who was said to 'walk,' combing her long tresses as she went, when any great calamity threatened the family; and it had been even whispered that the master of Clyffe had been, but a few nights back, forewarned, by her appearance, of his brother Cyril's death. That was a bad business for him (Clement) as well as Gideon. A great annual sum had been paid for many years for his custody, which would no longer swell the Carr revenues, unless, indeed, another Clyffard should be sent to take his place. More unlikely things, however, than that might happen, and truly, as Cator was used to say, 'Miss Grace as was was a very clever woman.' Still, unless it was to her own advantage, she would never move in the matter; she was all for herself was Grace. Gideon, it is true, sometimes got her to do things—but for him (Clement), she would not wag a finger—and even Gideon had always to give her a *quid pro quo*. What scheme had she now in hand with this girl Mildred? She surely could hardly dream of a double alliance with the Clyffard family; and besides, why should she benefit one to whose dead parents she owed such a grudge? She had been more angry at their marriage than even he or Gideon, and why then did she patronise and protect this girl, and ask her to Clyffe, and set her up—confound her—above her own—

Here an incident occurred which put a stop to Mr Clement Carr's 'brown study,' and made him very wide awake indeed to the fact that he was in the Blue Chamber at Clyffe Hall. It was simply a sigh, it is true, but a sigh of the profound sort, such as is produced only by the most heartfelt sorrow, or the most complicated troubles of the digestion—a sigh that filled the room with its melancholy monotone, and was uttered, as it seemed, by some invisible being close beside him, who might have been warning his legs by the self-same decaying fire, preparatory to retiring to the self-same bed. So certain was Mr Clement Carr of the proximity of the sound, that he did not even cast a glance up at the hole in the ceiling, from whence it might naturally have been expected to proceed, but sat glued to his chair, with his hair on end, carrying, *nem. con.*, in his own mind, all sorts of resolutions for living a spotless life for the remainder of his days. He had no more reason to doubt of this thing having occurred (as, indeed, it had

occurred) than that he was sitting by the mere remnants of a wood-fire, and that the oak floor had no carpet, and would presently grow cold to his feet; yet such is the marvellous elasticity of the human mind, that when the sound was not repeated, the idea began to grow within him, that, after all, it might only have been a creation of his fancy, or that perhaps it had been his own sigh that he had heard. People often sighed without knowing it; nothing was more—

With one agile spring, which must have taxed every muscle of his ponderous body, Mr Clement Carr here bounded into bed; for the sigh had again broken forth, and this time most certainly not from his own fluttering heart, although almost as near. Let us not bear too hardly upon this unhappy man. Mr Banting himself, previous to his miraculous discovery, would have done his best to 'jump' under similar circumstances. 'There are few things,' says a standard writer, 'more appalling than a sound of which we can give no explanation.' There is no wonder, then, that Mr Carr sat listening for more sighs, with a thumping in his ears like that of a steam-engine. After an hour or so of this frightful state of anticipation, he ventured to relieve his stiffened limbs by lying down; then, still listening, and with the engine still beating within, but with fainter strokes, drowsiness fell upon him, and presently blessed sleep, that falls, like the rain of heaven, even upon the most unjust, and holds them (let us hope), while it lasts, as innocent as the best of us.

When he awoke, which he did suddenly, and to the consciousness of all the horrors of his situation, the room was no longer illumined by artificial light, but dimly by the moon. The fire had, of course, gone out, but the two candles which had been left burning on the mantel-piece, although no longer lit, had certainly not burned out, for there they stood as high, it seemed, as when he had last seen them. While he wondered much at this phenomenon, Mr Clement's attention was called to the dressing-table by a third sigh, quite equal to its predecessors in depth of feeling. Before the glass sat a female form, in a loose black robe, engaged upon some article of needle-work. Her features could scarcely be discerned, but her figure was youthful, and her auburn hair flowed over her shoulders like a river of gold. Well might she sigh, considering the task she was engaged upon. An enormous piece of linen lay upon her lap, its whiteness contrasting forcibly with her black dress; the moonbeams exhibited this but a few moments ere thick darkness closed the scene; yet even in that scanty time, Clement Carr knew that he had seen the Phantom of Clyffe—the Fair Lady sewing a shroud. To be alone with this spectre, without light, without knowing how near she might be to him, and yet to know that she was there, he felt to be absolutely intolerable, and the wretched man gathered himself up with the courage of despair for a rush at the triple door; but just as he was in act to spring, the whole floor of the room seemed, with one weighty crash, to give way together, and, shrinking from the unknown abyss, Clement Carr fell back upon his pillow, and fainted from sheer extremity of terror.

#### CHAPTER X.—EAVES-DROPPING.

When Mr Clement Carr 'came to himself,' he came to himself alone; it was broad daylight too, and cheerful sounds of life—such as the champing

of horses and the clanking of milk-pails—came up from some region beneath. But the shock had been too severe for the effects of it to be removed from Clement's system by any ordinary means. All he saw only reminded him of what he had suffered. There were the gray embers of the wood-fire beside which he had shuddered at the mysterious sigh; the empty chair on which the Fair Lady had sat beside the toilet-table engaged in her ghastly occupation; the polished floor, apparently as safe and solid as ice after three weeks' frost, but which he scarcely dared to set his feet upon, after the proof he had so lately experienced of its instability. All the doors were locked just as he had left them, with their keys inside, and yet he had seen what he had seen.

Shaving was a difficult matter with Mr Carr that morning, and a very woebegone countenance he presented to the looking-glass. I do not say that his hair had turned gray in that single night—although I have known such an occurrence to happen in the case of a gentleman who unexpectedly left off wearing a wig—but he unquestionably looked like one who had passed a very bad night indeed. Mr Carr concealed his features from the servant who called him that morning, by means of a pocket-handkerchief, but he could not be making a pretence of blowing his nose the whole day long. Thus, happening, upon his way in search of Cator, with orders to prepare for their immediate departure from that accursed roof, to meet Mr Raymond Clyffard at the library door, that gentleman, after a stiff greeting, could not but remark: 'I fear, sir, you have slept but ill.'

'Ill is no word for it, Mr Raymond; I've— But perhaps it is not agreeable to the family to talk about such things.'

'Come in here, Mr Carr,' said the young man, ushering him into the common home of arms and literature. 'Now, sit you there, and tell me what has disturbed you.'

He pointed to a high-backed chair, carved thick with hounds and hunters, in which poor Clement looked like the sham-governor of Barataria; while he himself, toying with an antique goblet of very curious workmanship, stood leaning against a mighty tome of black-letter—such as Don Quixote would have loved—and listened.

Not one word did Raymond utter throughout the other's somewhat long and rambling narrative; but when he had quite finished, he quietly observed: 'Tis a strange story, Mr Carr, and more than strange if true.'

'True, sir?'

'Nay, I mean no offence; you may lie, and yet not know it. You took claret enough last night to raise a dozen ghosts.'

'Mr Raymond Clyffard,' returned Clement with that unmistakably earnest air with which a man who is not a habitual truth-teller narrates a genuine fact, 'I saw the Fair Lady of your House last night, and no other, as surely as that is a drinking-cup which you are holding in your hand, and nothing else.'

'As surely,' replied Raymond smiling, 'but not more so. Mark, now, how the eye may be deceived. This is indeed a goblet, in a sense; but see—I tilt it ever so little, and this trigger lets loose a pistol-ball which smites the drinker dead. This is the stirrup-cup of the good old times, in which not to pledge one's host at parting, was to offend him grievously. And yet, in truth, it is a mere show

of wickedness. There is no precision in a thing like this. If the bullet sped at all, I wager it would fly aslant. But the common mind delights to think it deadly; and because we have possession of such weapons, and because the house is old, and Crimes and Vice have played their parts in it, as needs must be in any house so old, hence come these vulgar tales of apparitions, noises—things you think you see or hear.

'I saw them and I heard them,' answered Clement obstinately; 'there was no "think" about it.'

'Then let there be no talking about it either, sir,' said Raymond sternly. 'We have had too much of such fooling. If it be your pleasure to leave Clyffe Hall so soon'—

'This very morning,' quoth Clement resolutely.

'Then let me beg of you in courtesy not to repeat—at least not within these walls—what you have just told to me. I will do what I can to fathom the mystery, and be sure, if I discover anything, that you shall know it.'

Clement gave the required promise with some show of frankness, and left the room, observing that he had business with his servant, and must needs go in person, for that he wished to see how his horse fared, which had shewn signs of suffering from his recent journey.

'A liar to the backbone,' muttered Raymond Clyffard, 'and I, a fool, to appeal to the honour of such a rogue! And yet he seemed to speak the truth a while ago—ah, Mildred, dearest!'

They were very like, those two; as like as youth and girl could be! The one swarthy as Night, with lustrous starlike eyes; the other as the mellow eve, what time the nightingale begins his melody, and the glowworm trims her lamp to light her love.

'Hush!' said she, closing the door behind her softly, and laying her finger on her lips; 'in this room, Raymond, never speak so loud. Nay, no room is safe, nowhere but Ribble.'

'Let us go to Ribble then.'

'Not now. I dare not do it. I sought you here to warn you—I wish I could say aid you—my own Raymond.'

She lingered on her words, as the lark lingers over her own sweet song, and gazed upon him, and then drooped her eyelids, like one who, looking at the sun, is blinded with excess of light, yet longs to look again.

'What is it Mildred, dear? More schemes, more stratagems? Why, this good woman your aunt is busier than a spider.'

'Ay, and as fell, as ruthless. When she works me harm—I fear her—ah, how I fear her!—but now that she is plotting against you, Raymond, I seem to fear her no more; I hate her. She has poisoned your poor father's mind against you.'

'She did that long ago, Mildred,' sighed the young man.

'Ay, but not to the bitter end, as now. She aims at nothing less than to get you expelled from this roof, that she may reign here the more supreme. She swung her first mesh across but yesterday—she told me so herself—and day by day her net will grow, I know; and Raymond—I—she'—

Mildred paused, and as the glory of the fruit of Tangiers shews through its scented rind, so did her blushes rise.

'She is not going to send you away, Mildred?' interposed her lover anxiously. 'If so, I shall

believe, indeed, that the Fair Lady prognosticates misfortune?'

'What mean you? Have you seen her?'

'Nay, not I, I faith; but this man Carr, your uncle—God save the mark!—has seen, or so he says, the Warning but last night in the Blue Chamber. All the doors were locked, and yet a lady with long auburn hair, and in a black dressing-gown, intrudes herself, and practises plain needlework. This he will carry to his sister, she to my father, and we know with dire effect. He will deem it bodes another Death.'

'In a black dressing-gown,' mused Mildred Leigh; 'with auburn hair; and in the state-room too. Did Mr Carr say anything had happened to the floor?'

'Ay, the fool swore that all the floor fell in.'

'Dear Raymond,' said the young girl earnestly, 'I see some sunlight where I looked not for it: you are not yet turned out of your own home. If I am not mistaken, Aunt Grace is playing a very dangerous game. I will watch her narrowly, and, if she has no mercy for *thee*, so help me Heaven, I will shew none to *her*. She gave me *thee*, it is true, a priceless gift, but never meant to give; and now'—

'Now what, dear Mildred? What is it that threatens you, and therefore me? And how can anything that happened in the Blue Chamber help us?'

'It is a long story, Ray, and this is neither the time nor the place to tell it. There is darkest plotting, and we must counterplot. At three o'clock, meet me at the mouth of Ribble Cave—then'—

'I hear the cat,' exclaimed Raymond softly.

'Puss, puss, puss!'

The door opened; Mrs Clyffard entered, and darting a suspicious glance from one to the other, observed coldly: 'Mildred, the breakfast waits; go make the tea, child.' The young girl left the room.

'Mr Raymond Clyffard, I am directed by your father'—

'Nay, madam,' interrupted he with mock politeness; 'my father has been directed by you.'

'Has been directed by me, then, if you will have it so,' continued his step-mother carelessly, 'to request, if your sporting engagements will permit of it, that you will partake his evening-meal with him.'

'My father is very kind,' said Raymond frankly; he had not had such an invitation for many months, and he was greatly pleased.

'Very kind,' repeated Mrs Clyffard icily. 'I hope you will prove yourself deserving of his kindness.'

'We shall be alone, I conclude, Mrs Clyffard?' inquired Raymond, his suspicions roused by the sarcastic tones of his step-mother.

'Oh, quite alone, sir; and I thank you for the implied compliment. No envious eye will witness your interesting interview; no alien ear will overhear your generous confidences.'

'Then we shall meet in some room which has no key-hole,' remarked Raymond scornfully, and with his hand upon the door. 'If you have no other commands, madam, I will rid you of my presence.'

In silence they interchanged one look of mutual defiance, the man's eye flashing contempt, the woman's hatred, and then the oak closed between them.

'I listen, do I?' muttered the woman to herself, 'You have found out so much, have you? He



calls me Cat, and that to Mildred too. Why were they here together at all? She dare not love him—no, she dare not, for her life! She knows that I would kill her if she did. And yet they were making tryst. "At the mouth of Ribble Cave, at three." The cat caught that at least!

# THE MONTH:

## SCIENCE AND ARTS.

By the time these notes appear in print, the question as to the laying of the Atlantic Telegraph will probably be settled. To electricians, it is a question of great interest, and unscientific people even cannot help paying it a little attention. It is safe to predict that if the laying be successful, it will be speedily followed by others on the same route, for one cable will not suffice for all the messages of business and politics that will crowd in for transmission between England and the United States. And as with every new cable made, experience has been gained, the manufacture of a proper cable will become a work of less and less difficulty. It is impossible not to wish success to an enterprise in which science and art have so important a share, and which is so fraught with beneficial results.

With this, and railway accidents, the National Portrait-gallery, the remarkable exhibition of miniatures at South Kensington, the compressed air-engines which (if practice will but agree with theory) are to be manufactured by thousands in the United States, the railway over Mont Cenis, and the speedy way of blowing up an enemy's ship invented by the maritime prefect of Toulon, to say nothing of official scandals and dissolution of parliament, Londoners have had quite enough to talk about at the end of their season. For those who can suggest improvement in railway management, there is a fair prospect of profit; and directors and managers may be sure of a reward for their endeavours to deprive railway-travelling of the 'touch-and-go' character which, according to Colonel Yolland, the government inspector, it now possesses.

It sounds strange to be told that we know less of the Holy Land than of the other countries round about the Mediterranean; but such on consideration appears to be the fact; and seeing how interesting accurate knowledge would be, we the more heartily approve the objects of the committee formed to promote research, and administer the Palestine exploration fund. Naturalists, geologists, archeologists, topographers, and others are all agreed that our information on many essential particulars of the Holy Land is deplorably scanty, and, in fact, a reproach to our age, which ought to be removed. The committee, including some of the highest dignitaries of the church, travellers, geographers, and others eminent in science, literature, and politics, have therefore a vigorous motive with which to commence operations. Subscriptions in furtherance of the scheme are dropping in, and competent explorers are ready to start; hence, for some years to come, we may expect a series of books, which will tell us all we wish to know about the geography, geology, natural history, and antiquities of Palestine.

A new style in architecture has long formed a subject for discussion, and, as is well known, many persons regard the present age with all its inventive-

ness as a poor one, because it has not yet originated a decidedly new style in architecture. But judging from a paper read before the Manchester Architectural Association, 'the Creation of a New Style' is likely to take place. The author, Mr Aitkin, discusses the merits of the Classic and the Gothic style, and shews what are the capabilities of each. 'In Classic,' he says, 'the beam is at fault; in Gothic, the pier; or, rather, it should be said, in the one the pier is too perfect; in the other, the arch; they do not perfectly balance themselves with their respective complements. Classic has, therefore, command over height in its perfect pier; Gothic, over width in its perfect arch.' The inference from this is, that if these two properties are conjoined, they will form a new and perfect basis of construction, to which decoration of a fitting character would have to be applied. Mr Aitkin thinks that our ornament of the future will lie somewhere between the extremes of the natural and the artificial. 'We neither want the naturalism of the one,' he remarks, 'nor the idealism of the other. As it is not right, in the one case, for the designer to practically assert the absence of mind in an exact and unassimilated copyism, so neither is it lawful, on the other hand, for nature to be sacrificed on the altar of idealism.' As to the time when this new style may be expected to make its appearance, he appears to imply that it will grow slowly out of modern requirements, and he deprecates hasty endeavours after a new style of which the principal motive is merely sensational.

The question of diminishing rainfall is again revived, as it appears, from further discussion of meteorological observations, that less rain falls now than formerly. In some counties, chiefly in the eastern half of the island, the diminution is greater than in others, and in some places small streams that used to be perennial, have ceased to flow. Certain considerations are hereby suggested. Does it indicate that we have entered on a cycle of dry years, or that a permanent change of climate is taking place? If the latter, to what is the change to be attributed? Does it depend on improved drainage and the grubbing up of hedge-rows which have been carried on of late years? So far as the evidence goes, it shews that diminution of the leafage in any district is followed by diminution in the rainfall. The question is an important one, and the sooner it is tested by further evidence the better. It would be interesting to compare English results with those obtained in other countries; and this will not be difficult, for in most parts of the continent a complete system of meteorological observations is now carried out. In France, a system of daily communications is kept up between the departments and the Imperial Observatory at Paris, and among these communications, charts of the weather occupy a principal place. Mr Le Verrier has just issued an instruction that these charts should be all drawn on the scale of the great hydrographic chart published by the French government: that towns, villages, hamlets, and communes be indicated by appropriate signs, so that the exact route of a storm, or the locality of any meteorological phenomenon, may be readily indicated. The signs will shew whether the rain has been beneficial or hurtful, whether the hail has been destructive or harmless; whether lightning has occurred, and with what consequences. The steady recording of these and other essential phenomena during a number of years will furnish a mass

of facts from which some of the laws of the climate in France may be deduced.

Cattle Shows, Dog Shows, and Poultry Shows are now recognised institutions. But we notice that an Insect Show is to be held in Paris, under the patronage of the Minister of Agriculture. It is to comprise two classes—the useful and the noxious. In the former will appear bees, cochineal and gall insects, silk-worms, and so forth, with their products, and the apparatus and instruments employed in the preparation of those products. Among the noxious insects will be wasps, certain kinds of moths and flies, and others, with specimens of the mischief they occasion and accomplish. As usual, prizes are to be given to successful exhibitors, so we may expect to hear something further of this novel insect show.

Professor Agassiz, well known for his researches in geology and paleontology, has left Boston (New England) for an exploring expedition in South America, with a corps of friends and assistants. His principal objects are investigation of the drift phenomena, or ancient glacial action in the Andes; study of the embryology of fishes in the Amazon and other rivers; and collection of marine invertebrates. The scheme is to go first to Rio Janeiro, make researches in that neighbourhood, then proceed to the Amazon, ascend that river to the mountains, and descend on the western side to Lima. A more promising region for accomplishing the special objects in view could scarcely have been selected, and valuable results may be looked for.

One or two facts in connection with this expedition are worth mention (though not scientific). Professor Agassiz intended at first to visit Brazil only for the benefit of his health, and to take a couple of assistants to collect specimens for the museum of which he is Director at Cambridge, near Boston. He spoke of his intention to Mr Nathaniel Thayer, and received for answer: 'Go home, Agassiz; find six assistants, and I will pay the bill;' and the Pacific Mail Steamship Company offered a free passage to the whole party in their new steamer *Colorado*.

In a consular report on the Fiji Islands, published by the Foreign Office, it is shewn that though far remote, that insular group is advancing rapidly in commercial importance. In 1864, the exports amounted to nearly twenty thousand pounds, in which cocoa-nut oil constitutes the largest item, and cotton the next. The cotton plant is there a perennial, and the soil is so fertile, that the quality of the cotton is described as equal to that grown in South America. The climate is such that Europeans can work in the open air all the year round: the white population of the islands is about three hundred, and it is stated that immigrants with about five hundred pounds of capital are much wanted, and would do well.

Our communications with the great South Sea will ere long be expedited, for the Panama, New Zealand, and Australian Royal Mail Company have a twin-screw steamer of sixteen hundred tons ready to commence the service, and are building other vessels, so as to maintain a regular line plying between Panama and Wellington. By this route not only will New Zealand be two thousand miles nearer than by the route at present followed, but the evils attending the voyage round Cape Horn will be avoided. The service on this side—that is, from the Isthmus to Southampton—will be performed by the West India Royal Mail Company,

and the whole voyage from England to New Zealand is expected to be accomplished in forty-five days. From Panama to Wellington, a distance of seven thousand two hundred miles, the rate of steaming is to be ten miles an hour.

Among new inventions we hear of plastic wood, or rather of a method by which wood can be rendered plastic, and so applied to various dilute purposes. The method consists in forcing dilute hydrochloric acid, under pressure, into the cells of the wood, and continuing it a sufficient time, according to the quality of the wood operated on. When completely saturated with the acid, the wood is washed in water, and subjected to pressure, which presses the fibres close together without breaking them, and reduces it to about a tenth of its original bulk, and the size and form thus impressed on it remain unaltered. Thus, if pressed in dies, the details retain all the sharpness ever afterwards, unless the wood should get soaked with water. Wood treated in this way is particularly well suited for carvings, as it cuts under the tool almost as easily as cheese; and it may be made ornamental, for various dyes can be forced in to colour it at the same time with the acid. But it can also be made hard as flint and incombustible, by forcing in a preparation of water-glass or soluble flint. From all this, it seems likely that wood may be employed in new ways for ornamental and useful purposes.

#### ELM-BLOSSOM.

THE bloom of the elm is falling,  
Falling hour by hour,  
On the buds and the golden blossoms,  
That are badges of Spring's sweet power;  
On the white-throat, little builder,  
That, as he buildeth, sings;  
On the chattering, glittering starling;  
And on the swallow's wings.

The bloom of the elm is falling  
Upon the passing bee;  
And on the rosy clusters  
That stud the apple-tree;  
On the sloping roof's brown thatching;  
And on the springing grass;  
On the dappled, meek-eyed cattle;  
On lover and on lass.

With the rain and with the snow-flakes,  
The angel of the year  
Comes with his swift wings glancing,  
Bringing us hope or fear:  
Now dying leaves, now blossoms,  
He scatters o'er the land;  
In storms and in the sunshine,  
I've seen his beckoning hand.

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Printed and Published by W. & R. Chambers, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by all Booksellers.